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Programme element V.1: International organizations, multilateral institutions and instruments

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. During the third session of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, the Panel felt that further information and study of the international organizations, multilateral institutions and legal instruments relevant to forests and of their mandates, as well as their progress in and capacity for implementing the forest-related outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, would be needed in order to achieve a more accurate diagnosis and to formulate proposals for action. It was also stated that final conclusions and proposals for action under that programme element would need to take into account conclusions and proposals for action under programme element V.2 (Contribution to consensus-building towards the further implementation of the Forest Principles), which was to be considered at the fourth session of the Panel, since many of the issues of the two programme elements were closely interrelated. More specific conclusions and proposals for action would be elaborated during the fourth session of the Panel, after, inter alia, the consideration of relevant proposals to be prepared by the informal high-level Inter-agency Task Force on Forests, and the results of other relevant initiatives.

2. The present report, which has been prepared in response to the above-mentioned request, provides additional information to complement earlier reports of the Secretary-General on programme element V.1 that were prepared for the second and third sessions of the Panel. It summarizes the background information received from different sources, and describes the context in which potential future action could be taken by the informal high-level Inter-agency Task Force on Forests, either collectively or by individual members. The report also includes a short description of the work accomplished under each programme element by the members of the Task Force. Finally, the report provides a set of conclusions and opportunities for future cooperative action.

I. CONTEXT

3. The Swiss-Peruvian Initiative on Forests, held in support of Panel work on programme element V.1, compiled a set of profiles of some 25 organizations and instruments during its preparations for its independent expert group meetings. The report of the Secretary-General on programme element V.1 (E/CN.17/IPF/1996/23) drew some broad conclusions based on the results of the Swiss-Peruvian Initiative and information from other sources. The report concluded that the activities of international organizations were in need of high-level policy guidance, in particular activities that involved support to national forest programmes and plans; research; and strategic data collection and analysis.

4. In response to a request made by the Panel at its third session to the Task Force, the Assistant Director-General for the Forestry Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the Chairman of the Task Force, convened a meeting on 17 and 18 October 1996 at FAO headquarters. The Task Force paid particular attention to the requests and proposed recommendations that were directed to international organizations, and reviewed

the proposals for action under each programme element of the Panel's programme of work, as contained in the report of the Panel on its third session.

5. The present report is based on the Task Force discussion and on tabular information provided in conference room paper 1. The conference room paper mainly contains information on organizations that are now participating in the Task Force, in the light of the proposals for action that emerged during the third session of the Panel; the paper covers only ongoing activities for which resources are allocated during the current budget cycle. It should be noted that budget cycles of the different Task Force members vary considerably. For example, at present the activities of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity are guided by the Conference of Parties of the Convention in one-year cycles, while others have two year cycles. Other sources utilized for the preparation of the present report includes the compilation entitled "Recent current and planned activities related to the work programme of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests" (E/CN.17/IPF/1995/2, annex), and the World Wide Web home pages of the organizations concerned.

6. The Panel's request for coordinated action by the United Nations system must be examined in the context of global international activities and assistance in the area of forests. In the final analysis, it will be crucial to view the activities of international organizations and their coordination not only in the light of their specific role and advantages among themselves but also within the overall context of multilateral, bilateral, non-governmental and private-sector activities. From that perspective, especially in financial terms, it becomes clear that the members of the Task Force are not principal actors. Only a small share of forest-sector official development assistance (ODA) is channelled through Task Force members, or even through the United Nations system as a whole, with the possible exception of the World Bank (see table 1). Furthermore, when one takes into account private-sector investments, the share of Task Force members and the United Nations system becomes even less significant. However, this does not detract from the fact that Task Force members perform important catalytic, supportive and leveraging roles in many countries and also undertake critical normative functions in terms of data collection, research, analysis, strategic study, policy formulation and the servicing of intergovernmental processes, which have significant impact and due to their comparative advantage are best executed at the international level. Moreover, the activities of international organizations, together with bilateral assistance to support conservation and sustainable forest management and development, are and will continue to be crucial to some countries, particularly those that cannot attract other investments to their forest sector. In addition to multilateral assistance, coordination and well planned disbursement of the largest share possible if forest sector international assistance may be the only way to achieve the desired impact on forests.

7. To illustrate that the forest sector in the United Nations system is not very large, the number of professional staff in Task Force members and their funding for forest programme and projects is presented in table 2. The differences in staffing and available resources are partly explained by the fact that the mandate and focus of Task Force members are quite different from each other, especially operationally, if not in the areas they cover. That fact makes the opportunity for overlap quite minimal, as indicated in the report of

the Secretary-General on programme element V.1 (E/CN.17/IPF/1996/23). Some overlap is not necessarily a disadvantage: overlap in terms of analytical and intellectual capacity, as well as in terms of organizations approaching forest issues from different angles and points of view, can only be enriching. However, overlap can be detrimental in such areas as data collection, publishing and certain field activities in view of the limited resources available to Task Force members.

Table 1. Official development assistance for forestry, 1993

(Millions of United States dollars)

Category of donors	Grant	Loan	Total
Bilateral	885.3	30.4	915.7
Development banks (including the World Bank[a] and the regional banks)	5.0	415.3	420.3
United Nations (total)	208.5	-	208.5
World Food Programme	121.0	-	
United Nations bodies other than WFP	87.5	-	
Total	1 098.8	445.7	1 544.5

Source: Report of the Secretary-General on programme element II (E/CN.17/IPF/1996/5).

Note: A hyphen (-) indicates that the item is not applicable.

[a] In 1993, the World Bank provided US$ 5.96 million in grants through the Global Environment Facility for forest biodiversity, and lent US$ 220.4 million.

Table 2. Inter-agency Task Force on Forests: professional staff and project funding

Agency	Number of professional staff	Funding for forest programmes and projects (Millions of dollars)
FAO	75	65[a]
UNDP	5	2.8[b] (+35[c])
ITTO	14	20[d]
UNEP	3[e]	0.8[f]
World Bank	20	356.7[g]
Convention on Biological Diversity	1[h]	-

Note: A hyphen (-) indicates that the item is not applicable.

[a] $15 million for annual programmes (1996/1997) plus $50 million for field programmes ($2 million from FAO Technical Programme, $20 million from UNDP country programmes, and $28 million from trust funds, in 1996).

[b] Forest capacity programme.

[c] UNDP country programmes (annual average), about US$ 20 million included in FAO field programmes.

[d] In 1995.

[e] In addition to the three posts on forests, UNEP has 24 staff working on forest-related activities.

[f] UNEP Forest Programme 1996/1997; UNEP also has forest-related programmes/projects (trade and environment, biodiversity, desertification control, environmental assessment, environmental economics etc.), with a budget of US$ 21.7 million in 1996/1997.

[g] Average annual approvals of Bank lending for forest projects for the 5-year period of 1992-1996; in addition, there is $23 million in annual grant approvals from the Global Environment Facility for biodiversity projects in forest ecosystems.

[h] One post on forest ecology; 31 posts for other biodiversity-oriented work.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CURRENT PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

8. The assessment presented in the present section is based, inter alia, on the discussion during the meeting of the Inter-agency Task Force on Forests in Rome on 17 and 18 October 1996. It provides a short review of the work undertaken by the Task Force members under each programme element of the work programme of the Panel. Many individual programmes and activities contribute to a number of the Panel's programme elements. For example, much work conducted under programme element I.1 is also highly relevant to most other programme elements; there is seldom a distinct category to which the different programmes and activities can be assigned. Task Force organizations, with their limited resources, fund projects that provide a fundamental base for all other forest-related activities conducted at the country level, focusing mainly on policy analysis, as well as planning and programming exercises, as the most effective catalytic support.

Programme element I.1, (National forest programmes and plans)

9. Almost all the Task Force organizations have been involved in developing and providing support to national forest programmes and strategies. The activities of FAO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) have been aimed directly at forests at the national, regional and global levels, whereas the national-level activities of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have been directed towards supporting the development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, as well as implementation of national programmes to minimize land degradation and to combat desertification, with specific support to forests being provided mainly at the regional and global levels. The support provided by UNDP and FAO for national forest programmes is carried out in coordination and collaboration with bilateral aid agencies and recipient countries. The World Bank, with the support of the FAO Investment Centre, is active through forest sector reviews and the formulation of investment programmes. In addition, the World Bank has supported the preparation of national environmental action plans. ITTO, through the International Tropical Timber Agreement objective 2000, is involved in the preparation of national strategies for forest management and/or reforestation, as well as for timber production and utilization. The activities of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity focus on biodiversity aspects of national plans, strategies and reporting requirements under the Convention. Generally, financing institutions tend to favour funding activities within the framework of a forest sector programme.

Programme element I.2, (Underlying causes of deforestation)

10. A broad range of analytical work has been undertaken by most of the Task Force members over the years in researching the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, the implications of consumption and production patterns, economic linkages associated with forest products, and the impacts of forest policies in various countries. The World Bank has environmental impact assessment procedures applicable to lending in all sectors. Work undertaken by Task Force members in other sectors, such as agriculture and energy, might actually have a greater impact on the underlying causes of

deforestation than their activities aimed specifically at the forest sector: the work by UNEP on environmental impact assessment and on the causes of environmental degradation is useful in that regard. Work undertaken by UNDP, the World Bank and others to alleviate poverty may also have considerable impact on the underlying causes of deforestation. Forest resource assessment, monitoring and data collection by FAO, as well as work conducted on national forest resource accounting that takes into account the full value of forests, provide an important basis for developing a clearer understanding of the actual problems associated with deforestation worldwide.

Programme element I.3, (Traditional forest-related knowledge)

11. Traditional forest-related knowledge does not seem to be specifically covered by any of the Task Force members. However, FAO has addressed the issue as it relates to local communities in its Forest, Trees and People Programme. It should be noted that the topic is also covered to some extent by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations University (UNU). Biodiversity country studies have been undertaken with the active involvement of UNEP, containing information on the use of biodiversity by indigenous people and local communities. UNEP will publish Human Values of Biodiversity: Perspectives from Indigenous and Traditional Peoples in 1997. The World Health Organization is cataloguing medicinal plants. The World Bank, FAO and UNDP are planning to hold consultations on digital mapping combined with social mapping. There is an increasing general trend in encouraging broad local participation and consultations in lending and project design for field-level activities. Activities in the areas of participatory planning, conflict resolution and support for enhanced negotiation capacity are actually becoming standard practice on the part of Task Force members. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is also involved in a normative manner as part of its work in implementing article 8 (j) of the Convention.

Programme element I.4, (Arid zone forests and forest affected by air pollution)

12. FAO, UNDP/Office to combat Desertification and Drought, the World Bank and UNEP have activities directly related to desertification and mitigation of the effects of drought. The Convention on Biological Diversity and UNEP have several activities related to arid zones and biodiversity. All the Task Force members have undertaken programmes, especially at the field level, that are geared towards land rehabilitation through tree planting. The preparation of guidelines for tree plantations in arid zones, support for national action plans, the development of indicators for monitoring, especially in Africa, and support for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, are also under way in all the above-mentioned bodies, which have felt a significant increase in the country demand for forest-related projects in arid zones, as illustrated by world Bank investment support of US$ 1,278 million for forest-related activities in arid zones provided since 1990. The Bank provides support to about 27 major projects, largely in Africa and South Asia.

13. FAO, UNEP and the World Bank are the only Task Force members that are directly involved in programmes on forests affected by pollution. Although their activities are mostly concerned with data collection, assessment and monitoring, a significant proportion of World Bank forest lending in Eastern Europe has been directed to the rehabilitation of forests damaged by pollution. ITTO has several field projects on the protection and rehabilitation of forests after fires. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) (not covered in detail in the present report) is the United Nations body most heavily involved in data collection in this area. Because of the existing European convention on transboudary pollution, the programmes involving forests affected by air pollution in the United Nations system have a European focus.

Programme element I.5, (Countries with low forest cover)

14. Some of the concerns in programme element I.5 are related to those of general rural development, poverty alleviation, and the general effects of environmental degradation in areas of low forest cover. In a broader sense, those issues are also addressed by programmes in other areas in which Task Force members are active. Other concerns, such as ways to protect existing forested areas or other wooded lands while allowing access to local populations for subsistence, are addressed mostly by FAO, as well as through field projects financed by UNDP, ITTO and the World Bank, and to a large extent by the donor community. The activities relevant to that programme element are usually included in those geared towards national forest plans and programmes (NFPs).

Programme element II, (Financing, technology transfer, capacity-building and international cooperation)

15. FAO, UNDP, the World Bank and ITTO are all involved in field operations and financing of forest and forest-related projects involving capacity-building and technology transfer, with the World Bank spending the largest amount. Funding for forest programmes by the different Task Force members is recorded in tables 1 and 2. FAO, UNDP and ITTO have funding for forest projects originating from different sources, both multilateral and bilateral. Forest-sector ODA in the form of grants through multilateral arrangements to the United Nations system except the World Food Programme amounts to less than US$ 100 million, or less than 10 per cent of the total ODA for forest programmes.

16. Experience shows that the coordination and effectiveness of activities of international institutions carried out at the national level is greatly enhanced and facilitated in countries that themselves coordinate their domestic policies and international cooperation relevant to forests. However, the coordination of multilateral and bilateral policy approaches and financing would be the best tactic to optimize the use of available funds for international assistance to the forest sector most effectively, and should be explored. This could be accomplished in conjunction with collaboration efforts in support of national forest programmes. Forest partnership agreements between donors and recipient countries should be seen as a tool for facilitating the implementation of NFPs. Analysis of that topic has been undertaken by the Panel, but further work appears necessary to reach more definite and concrete conclusions.

Programme element III.1 (a), (Forest resources assessment)

17. FAO has by far the strongest programme in the area of forest resource assessment. However, other organizations, such as UNEP, which has an environmental information and assessment programme, and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity which was given a mandate for involvement in criteria and indicator processes related to sustainable forest management at the third session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention, will eventually build capacity in areas that would be of value to a broader forest assessment. ITTO collects information on permanent forest estates in tropical countries. An ongoing activity by the UNEP/World Conservation Monitoring Centre on biodiversity data management and global assessment, under which data will be tabulated and computerized, should also be useful for forest assessment. Many field projects of different organizations support national-level assessment, for example, those of FAO, UNDP and the World Bank, as well as other donors. FAO is currently developing a forest resources assessment strategic plan.

Programme element III.1 (b), (Forest resources valuation)

18. Normative work undertaken in the area includes GEF work on incremental cost, which entails, inter alia, forest resource valuation, in which UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank are involved. UNEP has been active in work on methodologies to value environmental and natural resources in general, and is currently involved in the preparations of case studies. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is also looking into experience with incentives. FAO, UNEP and the World Bank have jointly produced guidelines on valuing forests. FAO has produced a manual on forestry in national income accounts, and has developed reference documentation on valuing forests. ITTO has also produced studies on the economic linkages between international trade and sustainable forest management. The World Bank uses valuation as an integral component of its lending activities. There is an increasing trend to undertake more analytical work on forest accounting systems and to include the full value of forests in natural resource accounts as one of the measures to prevent deforestation. Indirectly, Task Force members influence the actual value of forests through the focus of their financing and technical assistance projects. There is ongoing academic work on that topic, in which FAO and ITTO are involved to a limited extent, as well as the private finance sector and non-governmental organizations.

Programme element III.2, (Criteria and indicators)

19. FAO and ITTO are the Task Force members most actively engaged in developing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. FAO has a regular programme on criteria and indicators, and contributes with technical inputs to the established regional initiatives, such as the Helsinki and Montreal processes. A few meetings on criteria and indicators in regions that have not yet started their own processes have already taken place, mostly for information and to provide catalytic support; they were organized under the auspices of FAO and UNEP. ITTO has also developed criteria and indicators for sustainable tropical forest management, and has several field projects directed towards their implementation. ITTO has plans to review and update its programme and

approach in the light of recent international developments in the area. In addition, UNEP has conducted an overview of environmental indicators.

Programme element IV, (Trade and the environment)

20. FAO, ITTO and UNEP are the most active Task Force members in the area of forest-related trade. FAO and ITTO are engaged in work directly related to forest product processing, marketing and trade; UNEP is engaged in a more general sense and has a regular programme on trade and the environment. FAO and UNEP have produced publications on tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade in forest products as well as on certification and labelling. ITTO holds annual policy discussions on those topics as they relate to tropical forests. ITTO and FAO are also involved in assistance to downstream processing, marketing and analysis of macroeconomic trends in the supply of and demand for timber and forest products.

21. It should be noted that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is also actively involved in the area, as is the World Trade Organization (WTO), but more as a rule-making body. UNDP and UNCTAD have held expert meetings and conducted case studies on trade and the environment, as have the World Bank/WTO/UNEP/the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Data on trade in forest products is collected by FAO, UNCTAD and ITTO, as well as by ECE.

Research

22. International bodies most actively involved with forest research include the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) and FAO and to a limited extent UNESCO, UNU, and UNEP, as well as the European Forest Institute and the Inter-African Bureau for Research on Tropical Forests. Even if none of the Task Force members are research institutions, sensu stricto, it should be noted that FAO, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank are the co-sponsors of the CGIAR system, to which CIFOR and ICRAF belong; the sponsors pool their resources and contribute their particular capacities to the system, with the support of donor countries.

Biological resources

23. ITTO has developed guidelines on the conservation of tropical biodiversity. UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank finance biodiversity projects through GEF. UNEP has an on-going programme on the theme "Caring for biological resources", which has forest specific components, and UNEP has conducted country studies on biodiversity data management, as well as a global biodiversity assessment. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has a strong general normative mandate in the area. At its third session, held in Argentina in November 1996, the Conference of Parties to the Convention decided on a future programme of work for terrestrial biological diversity, and requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention secretariat to develop, in consultation and with the assistance of the Panel, or any successor arrangement, a focused work programme on forest biodiversity that would place an emphasis on research. FAO has a forest genetic resources programme that has been developed over the

past three decades. Such organizations as ITTO, the World Bank, UNEP and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources - World Conservation Union have prepared guidelines for integrating the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into the management of all forest lands, including production forests.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATIVE ACTION

A. Conclusions

1. National forest programmes

24. During the Task Force meeting, there was agreement among all members that NFPs appear to be an effective and a fundamental umbrella framework that could provide a promising opportunity for enhancing the coordination of forest-related activities, both domestic and international, at the country level. Considering that various international organizations are currently undertaking activities that either directly support the formulation of NFPs or assist countries in the formulation of other relevant sectoral plans or strategies (in such areas as biodiversity and desertification), opportunities for better coordination and greater coherence in approaches exist. This holds true not only for activities related to planning but also for activities and efforts that focus on the implementation of national forest programmes by all actors involved and not only by the multilateral organizations.

2. Finance

25. In view of the fact that ODA channelled through international organizations is just a small share of total forest assistance, there would be a definite advantage to have an agreement for developing a mechanism to promote closer communication, coordination and collaboration among all actors involved in international assistance to forests, at the international as well as the national levels, in order to work in harmony with the remaining share of ODA.

3. Coordination

26. There is a need to clarify United Nations system-wide coordination responsibilities relevant to national forests programmes. There is a need to ensure practical approaches in the implementation of country projects based upon a common understanding between headquarters and field offices. At the country level, United Nations resident coordinators must ensure that coordination among Task Force members takes place, and that the principle of country leadership and choice is respected. However, the resident coordinators themselves do not necessarily have to be coordinators of forest-related activities. That role can be delegated to the organization that is best suited to perform that function, based on the extent of its involvement and experience in a particular country, at the request of the host country.

4. Underlying causes of deforestation

27. There is a discernable gap within the system in the undertaking of comprehensive studies on national and international underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation. The discussion of underlying causes of deforestation by the Panel has tended to view that issue as a cross-sectoral, highly country-specific and even local-area-specific issue. The diagnostic tool suggested in the report of the Secretary-General to the Panel on this topic could be a useful instrument for developing agencies, investment banks and national organizations responsible for policy development, land-use planning and effective project design and implementation.

5. Traditional forest-related knowledge

28. The relatively new area of traditional forest-related knowledge has just begun to be discussed at a policy level by the Panel, and would be a potential area for close collaboration among Task Force members. This is a complex question, in which there is a definite gap in activities of the United Nations system, in particular in the areas of cultural value systems, customary law, legal systems and property rights, land and resource use systems, and conflict resolution, all of which are integral parts of sustainable forest management systems. While FAO has already developed some knowledge and methodologies in the area, there is a need for increased analytical, programme formulation and basic policy work on the topic. Increased involvement in Task Force work on this topic by UNESCO, CIFOR, ICRAF and UNU needs to be explored.

6. Rehabilitation of arid zone forest land

29. Activities related to the rehabilitation of arid zones is ongoing in most of the agencies. The Convention to Combat Desertification has resulted in a renewed focus and attention on the particular plight of Africa as regards the effects of desertification and drought.

7. Airborne pollutants

30. Collaborative work on the effects of airborne pollutants on forests is ongoing, and appears to work well within the framework of the regional convention in Europe. Outside the European region, however, there is a gap in activities in forest areas affected by pollution, except fires.

8. Countries with low forest cover

31. Areas that will require increased attention by international organizations will be assistance to countries with low forest cover in the identification and removal of land tenure, taxation and resource pricing policies that perversely inhibit local communities or private farmers from investing in tree planting and forest management. There could be some benefit in defining exactly what constitutes a low forest cover for the purposes of such activities, and in using

such a definition to assess the ecological, social and economic needs of countries with low forest cover, and to facilitate international assistance.

9. Scientific research

32. While scientific research provides the underpinning for the technological and ecological aspects of sustainable forest management, there is a need for high-level consultation and guidance on forest research priorities, as proposed in the report of the Panel on its third session. Better coordination and strengthening of research, as well as the establishment of an international network of research organizations, needs to be fostered. There is already an indication that some of the relevant organizations are ready to clarify some of their research needs and identify priorities.

10. Biological resources

33. Conservation and the sustainable use of biological resources are now attracting increased attention, both in normative programmes and in lending, as well as in field-level activities. This is reflected in many of the criteria and indicators developed for sustainable forest management. There is scope for increased coordination of the forest genetic work of FAO, UNEP and the Convention on Biological Diversity, both at the intergovernmental and at the secretariat levels.

11. Forest resource assessment

34. There is ample scope for collaboration in forest resource assessment. Contributions by organizations with useful data for a broader forest assessment would enrich the necessary global database associated with forest resource assessment. In the absence of necessary data, it would be important to identify which organizations are best suited to collect certain data at the national level. Currently, there is inadequate capacity to collect the broader set of data, as well as inadequate resources for such an effort at the national level.

12. Forest valuation

35. FAO, UNEP and the World Bank have already cooperated in the area of forest valuation, and are planning to continue their analytical work, monitoring developments and encouraging approaches that lead to new perspectives on forests values. Special emphasis should be given to activities that involve forest resource accounting and full cost internalization.

13. Criteria and indicators

36. There is a need to strengthen cooperation in activities directed towards regions not yet engaged in developing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. While a few meetings, informative and catalytic in nature,

have already taken place, it might also be necessary to monitor the results of those activities, as well as of those initiatives already in place, especially for the promotion of follow-up action and implementation. Continued cooperation between FAO, UNEP and UNDP, supported by CIFOR, should be encouraged, as well as the increased involvement by the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

14. Trade in forest products

37. Increased collaboration and coordination is needed between FAO and ITTO as regards collection of trade relevant data to eliminate some overlap. The extent of the involvement and the role of the United Nations system in certification and labelling schemes has yet to be examined and clarified.

B. Future opportunities for cooperative action

38. Task Force members have agreed to pursue in more concrete terms a mode of cooperation to support NFPs as the shared framework for coordinated action at the country level. Task Force members will also further explore modalities for sharing information on country level projects and the outcomes of peer reviews of such projects.

39. To facilitate progress, the following steps could be taken:

(a) Once the Panel, at its fourth session, agrees on its final conclusions and proposals for action, and the Commission on Sustainable Development has endorsed them at its fifth session, a joint letter from the executive heads of the Task Force members, addressed to representatives of Task Force members at the country and regional levels, could be prepared. The goal of such a letter would be to ensure that all country offices of the organizations receive coherent policy guidance for the implementation of the outcome of the Panel, and that they be instructed to promote a common approach in their future activities related to NFPs and forests;

(b) Countries from various regions could be identified for pilot initiatives to analyse and increase the effectiveness of coordination of forest-related work at the country level and identify ways and means of enhancing it in the future;

(c) UNDP could explore the possibility of raising funds to conduct a pilot exercise in a few countries on the application of the diagnostic tool for identifying the underlying causes of deforestation at the national level;

(d) The Task Force could also further explore modalities for disseminating information on successful policy interventions at the national level.

40. As to traditional forest-related knowledge, one potential course of action could be to encourage relevant organizations, in particular the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, UNEP, UNESCO, CIFOR and UNU, to undertake a systematic study of the policy, institutional, and legal frameworks

required to support the utilization of traditional knowledge. The establishment of UNESCO chairs and a UNU centre of excellence should be explored. The World Intellectual Property Organization, together with UNCTAD, could undertake a study aimed at enhancing the understanding of the relationship between intellectual property and traditional forest-related knowledge.

41. The Task Force has contacted CIFOR and IUFRO in order to involve them in the work of the Task Force on research. A conference room paper on forest research will be before the Panel at its fourth session, in which the outcome of the third session of the Panel, and the results of the meeting on research policy dialogue organized by CIFOR in 1994 and of various government initiatives will be used as a starting point. The Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity transmitted an input to the Panel at its fourth session, listing a set of research priorities that it had identified at its third meeting, which could also provide an additional starting point for collaborative work on research within the Task Force. The Task Force will also further explore modalities for the collaboration, coordination and enhancement of research and data-collection activities undertaken by several international organizations.

42. The Task Force agreed to present specific plans for forest resource assessment cooperation, including the Forest Resource Assessment programme (FRA 2000), in order to allow for concrete commitments by Governments. In addition, the Task Force may also make proposals on approaches to harmonize and coordinate the range of forest-related data and information requests made by countries in different forums. The Task Force will also explore the possibilities of exchanging experiences and undertaking further systematic work on forest resource accounting and full cost internalization.

43. The Task Force has also agreed to present specific plans for further work on criteria and indicators, especially with regard to those countries that are not participating in the ongoing processes, and on monitoring progress in implementation.

44. There is scope for collaboration between ITTO, FAO and UNEP in the area of analysis of the consequences of trade restrictions in forest products, in terms of meeting environmental or social objectives, as well as the impact of non-tariff barriers on forest products trade. ITTO and FAO will also review their plans related to future studies/publications on timber certification with a view to avoiding duplication.

45. The Task Force has agreed to continue the current informal arrangement for coordination, cooperation and collaboration in order to support the decisions on forest-related issues of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests at its fourth session and the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifth session, beyond the completion of the activities of the Panel.